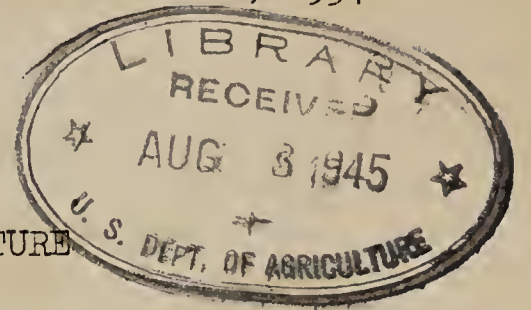


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Washington

FARM POPULATION ESTIMATES
January 1, 1937

About 80,000 fewer persons lived on farms at the beginning of 1937 than a year earlier. According to estimates of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the farm population was 31,729,000 on January 1 this year compared with 31,809,000 a year earlier and 31,801,000 in 1935. The net loss of 80,000 persons is the first net loss reported since 1929. During 1935, farm population gained by 8,000 persons.

It is estimated that during the past calendar year, 716,000 babies were born to farm women and that 349,000 farm residents died. Therefore, if there had been no migration from or to farms during 1936, the farm population would have been increased by 367,000 persons. But some farm people moved to towns and cities and some townspeople moved to farms: 1,166,000 persons moved from farms to villages, towns and cities, and 719,000 persons moved to farms from villages, towns and cities. That is, 447,000 more persons left farms than came to farms. The number of babies born to farm women was not enough to make up for all the losses through migration and through death.

These estimates, based upon reports for 63,000 farms in all parts of the country, were furnished by 12,000 farmers.

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Decrease in Farm Population During 1936

The decrease in farm population during 1936 followed a small increase in 1935. The largest difference between the figure for 1935 and 1936 is in the number of persons who moved to farms from villages, towns and cities. The number moving to farms last year decreased by more than 100,000 over 1935. The number moving from farms during 1936 was about the same as during 1935, resulting in a larger net movement from farms to villages, towns and cities during 1936 than there had been during 1935. Births showed a slight decline and deaths a slight increase, in common with the trends for the entire country. During both 1935 and 1936 there was an appreciable excess of births over deaths; the net migration away from farms, however, accounted for a loss of 80,000 persons during 1936. During 1935, there had been a gain of 8,000 persons.

Reversal of 1930-35 trend

With a decrease in farm population there is a reversal of the trend observed during the years 1930-35, when farm population increased every year. Since 1910 there have been several periods when the farm population reported decreases. From 1910 to 1918 there was a decrease which became pronounced during the World War. Following the war, farm population increased until 1921. Farm population decreased between 1922 and 1929, and at the beginning of 1930 there were fewer people on farms than there had been at any time since the World War. From 1930 to 1936 farm population increased somewhat. During the past four years the number of people on farms has remained nearly constant, changing by less than 100,000 each year.

The result of all the changes of the last 27 years is that the farm population today is about 1 percent less than it was in 1910. Thus, although the number of people in the United States has increased by nearly 40 percent since 1910, the number of people living on farms today is slightly less than it was in 1910.

Farm population decreased during 1936 because more people moved from farms than moved to farms, and this difference was greater than the number added to the farm population through the excess of births over deaths. Since 1920, more people have moved from farms than to farms during every year except 1932. The increases in farm population between 1930 and 1935 were due more to the fact that fewer people were moving to towns and cities than to any "back-to-the-land movement." With the resumption of urban employment opportunities in recent years, there has been an increase in net migration from farms. The number of people who left farms was nearly half a million greater than the number of people who moved to farms. But this number is still less than the average before 1930. During the period of urban prosperity, 1925-29, farms were annually sending out nearly 600,000 more persons than they were receiving from villages, towns and cities, and during

the years 1920 to 1924 the average was even greater. Once, in 1922, the loss by migration to towns and cities was more than one million, and during 1926 it exceeded 900,000. Thus, the net migration from farms to towns and cities during 1936 was only about half as large as during 1926.

Farm population changes not unusual

Among farm people, as among Americans generally, there is a great deal of movement every year. The Census of 1935 showed that one out of every six farmers moves each year, although nearly half of all farm owners had been on their farms for 15 years or more. Every year many farmers move from one farm to another and many farm people move to villages, towns and cities. Some of these are young men and women looking for their first jobs, some are people who recently came from towns and cities to try their luck at farming, others are older people who are giving up farming for some other occupation or are retiring, and still others live on farms only during the summers, spending the winters in town. At the same time people are moving to farms from towns and cities, some are returning to the parental home after an unsuccessful search for jobs or unsatisfactory employment, others are returning to take up farming; some are returning temporarily or alternating farm work with other employment and every year some persons move from towns and cities to start farming.

As a result of this ebb and flow of farm population the number of people living on farms changes from year to year. Every State reports some movement in both directions; even in the drought area last year, some people moved to farms from towns and cities, although the number leaving farms was greater.

Many of the persons who move to farms are the same persons who moved from farms earlier in the year or during a previous year. Usually, when many people are leaving farms there is also a large number moving to farms. During 1936, for every 100 persons who left farms 62 moved to farms; and during 1935 for every 100 persons who left farms 68 moved to farms. During the depression years, 1930-34, for every 100 persons who left farms there were 92 who moved to farms.

Pronounced changes in some regions

Although the net change in farm population for the United States as a whole was slight in 1936, pronounced changes took place in some of the major geographic divisions. In the West North Central and West South Central States, where the drought of 1936 was particularly severe, the decreases reported during 1934 and 1935 were continued during 1936. As a result of its losses, the West North Central division at the first of this year had fewer people on

farms than in 1930. In the other geographic divisions the number of people on farms was greater than it was in 1930, but in the West South Central and Mountain States the differences were small. If there are further decreases during 1937, farm population in the latter regions will drop below the 1930 level. A number of States in these regions already have fewer people on farms than they had in 1930. During 1936 there were decreases in the Mountain States, although the fact that the western portion, including Idaho and Arizona, was receiving migrants from the drought States to the east, kept the losses of the entire region at a relatively small figure. The Middle Atlantic States, including New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, also reported a decrease in farm population, as did the industrialized States of the East North Central group. In both cases the losses were due largely to migration from farms to towns and cities. In the South Atlantic and East South Central States, farm population increased, primarily because there were many more births than deaths in these States.

The movement from farms to villages, towns and cities was greater than the movement to farms from villages, towns and cities. Only the Pacific Coast States and Florida are exceptions. These exceptions are probably the result of movement of persons from towns and cities in other States to farms in these States, which were receiving migrants from the drought areas. Although the movement from farms to towns and cities was approximately the same in 1936 as it had been during 1935, the movement to farms during 1936 was somewhat less. This was particularly true in the West North Central States where 217,000 persons left farms and only 90,000 persons moved to farms, and in the West South Central States where 222,000 persons moved from farms to towns and cities and only 112,000 persons moved to farms from towns and cities. Likewise, in the South Atlantic States 174,000 persons moved from farms to towns and cities and only 98,000 persons moved to farms from towns and cities.

The movement of persons from farms in one State to farms in some other State accounts for a part of the population changes last year. In proportion to their farm population, the Pacific States gained most through this movement from farm to farm. It is estimated that farms in the Pacific States received a net gain of 23,000 persons from farms in other areas. Twenty-seven thousand persons moved from farms in the West North Central States to farms in other areas, while in the West South Central States 31,000 persons left to go to farms in other areas. The South Atlantic division reports a large gain as a result of the farm-to-farm movement; in the other geographic divisions the gains or losses through this movement were small.

Droughts - major factors in population movement

The outstanding event of 1936 for the farm population was the drought. The West North Central and West South Central divisions, which include most of the area that was severely affected, lost farm

population. In the West North Central States, according to these estimates, farm population declined by 101,000 persons and in the West South Central States the decrease was 62,000 persons. The Mountain division with the eastern part suffering from drought and the western part receiving migrants from the drought area, reported a decrease of 21,000. Farm population in the Pacific Coast States increased by 37,000 persons, largely as a result of migrations from the drought area. Increases in the South Atlantic and East South Central divisions are less clearly traceable to migrations from the drought area, but undoubtedly the effects were felt there also.

These estimates may seem small in view of the general impression of persons flocking from the drought areas to the more humid slopes of the West Coast. The figures given represent only the movement to and from farms and are not intended to show the total movement from the drought States to other areas. Moreover, a few people left farms in Pacific Coast States to return to their former residence or to go elsewhere; this movement has been taken into account. Many farm people who move to the West Coast do not settle on farms when they first arrive, some of them move to towns or cities and, therefore, are not included in the figures for the Pacific States. Others become agricultural laborers and live in tourist camps, labor camps, villages and other places not on farms.

Since the Bureau's figures deal only with people who move to or from farms, they do not include the persons who moved from towns and cities in the drought areas to towns and cities elsewhere. Moreover, they do not indicate how many of the persons who left drought area farms for towns and cities went to some nearby place and how many went to towns and cities in other States. The schedules, however, do indicate something of the extent to which a catastrophe like the droughts of recent years affects the movements of farm people and affects other areas than those where rainfall is deficient.

Farms provide large share of population growth

The decline in the farm population during 1936 was due to migration from farms. Had there been no movement from or to farms, there would have been an increase of 367,000 persons during 1936, for the births exceeded the deaths by that number.

If all persons who are born and reared on farms remained on farms, the farm population would grow much more rapidly than the other parts of the total population of the United States. Farm families are usually larger than city families, and although only one-fourth of the total population lives on farms, nearly one-third of the babies each year are born to farm women. Seven hundred thousand young people on farms reach maturity each year. For every man engaged in agriculture who dies or reaches retirement age there are two young men on farms reaching maturity and ready to start for themselves.

Under existing conditions all of them do not find places in agriculture and some of them move away from farms.

More and more, the United States, like a number of other countries, is looking to the farms to furnish the children who will become the next generation of adults. So long as there is virtually no immigration, any population growth must come from within the country and farms probably will, for some time, continue to provide more than their share of this growth. If that is the case, it means that there probably will be a continued movement from farms to towns and cities; a movement of young people who have been reared and educated on farms to industrial and urban employment. It, therefore, becomes a matter of importance to know from which localities migrants come and where they go, who they are, why they move, what they do at their destination, how many return, why they return, and what happens to the areas which they leave as well as those to which they go.

Tables

Note: The estimates given below are based upon the returns from questionnaires mailed to farmers and are adjusted to Census figures. Because of difficulties in beginning the series, the figures for the years 1920-1923 are considered less reliable than those for later years. THESE TABLES SUPERSEDE ALL PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS OF THESE ESTIMATES.

Table 1. - Farm Population in the United States

Year	: Number of persons	:	Year	: Number of persons
	: on farms January 1	:		: on farms January 1
1910	: <u>/1</u> 32,076,960	:	1929	: 30,220,000
1920	: <u>/2</u> 31,614,269	:	1930	: <u>/3</u> 30,169,000
1921	: 31,763,000	:	1931	: 30,497,000
1922	: 31,749,000	:	1932	: 30,971,000
1923	: 31,130,000	:	1933	: 31,693,000
1924	: 30,317,000	:	1934	: 31,770,000
1925	: 30,830,000	:	1935	: 31,800,907
1926	: 30,619,000	:	1936	: 31,809,000
1927	: 30,170,000	:	1937	: 31,729,000
1928	: 30,188,000	:		:

/1 Estimated, U. S. Bureau of the Census

/2 Enumerated, U. S. Bureau of the Census

/3 Estimated, based on Census enumeration of April 1, 1930

Table 2. - Recent Losses and Gains in the Farm Population of the United States

During period or calendar year	: Net loss of	:	Net gain in
	: farm population	:	: farm population
1910 - 1919	: 463,000	:	: -----
1920 - 1924	: 784,000	:	: -----
1925 - 1929	: 661,000	:	: -----
1930 - 1934	: -----	:	: 1,632,000
1910 - 1934	: 276,000	:	: -----
1930	: -----	:	: 328,000
1931	: -----	:	: 474,000
1932	: -----	:	: 722,000
1933	: -----	:	: 77,000
1934	: -----	:	: 31,000
1935	: -----	:	: 8,000
1936	: 80,000	:	: -----

Table 3. Movement To and From Farms

Year	Persons	Persons	Net movement from	
	arriving at farms from cities, towns, and villages	leaving farms for cities, towns, and villages	Cities, towns, and to farms	Farms to cities, towns, and villages
1920	560,000	896,000	-----	336,000
1921	759,000	1,323,000	-----	564,000
1922	1,115,000	2,252,000	-----	1,137,000
1923	1,355,000	2,162,000	-----	807,000
1924	1,581,000	2,068,000	-----	487,000
1925	1,336,000	2,038,000	-----	702,000
1926	1,427,000	2,334,000	-----	907,000
1927	1,705,000	2,162,000	-----	457,000
1928	1,698,000	2,120,000	-----	422,000
1929	1,604,000	2,081,000	-----	477,000
1930	1,611,000	1,823,000	-----	212,000
1931	1,546,000	1,566,000	-----	20,000
1932	1,777,000	1,511,000	266,000	-----
1933	944,000	1,225,000	-----	281,000
1934	700,000	1,051,000	-----	351,000
1935	825,000	1,211,000	-----	386,000
1936	719,000	1,166,000	-----	447,000
1920 - 1924	5,370,000	8,701,000	-----	3,331,000
1925 - 1929	7,770,000	10,735,000	-----	2,965,000
1930 - 1934	6,578,000	7,176,000	-----	598,000

Table 4. - Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and major geographic divisions,
1920 - 1937 /1

Division and year	: Farm population: on January 1	: Increases in farm population during the year due to: Births	: Decreases in farm population during the year due to: Arrivals: from city, town, or village	: Gain or loss due to farm migration
	: 000's	: 000's	: 000's	: 000's
UNITED STATES:				
1937	31,729			
1936	31,809	716	719	349
1935 /3	31,801	727	825	333
1934	31,770	749	700	344
1933	31,693	721	944	326
1932	30,971	746	1,777	328
1931	30,497	741	1,546	334
1930 /4	30,169	742	1,611	344
1929	30,220	750	1,604	324
1928	30,188	757	1,698	303
1927	30,170	763	1,705	288
1926	30,619	782	1,427	324
1925	30,830	795	1,336	304
1924	30,817	801	1,581	301
1923	31,130	810	1,355	316
1922	31,749	826	1,115	308
1921	31,763	854	759	304
1920 /3	31,614	825	560	340
New England:				
1937	709			
1936	708	10	33	9
1935 /3	712	10	29	8
1934	713	11	27	8
1933	698	10	32	8
1932	660	10	56	8
1931	631	11	61	8
1930 /4	568	10	64	8
1929	583	10	45	8
1928	586	10	49	7
1927	589	10	55	7
1926	604	11	49	8
1925	610	11	41	7
1924	604	11	49	7
1923	608	11	41	7
1922	623	11	33	7
1921	629	12	31	7
1920 /3	626	11	4	8

Table 4. - Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and major geographic divisions, 1920 - 1937 /1, continued.

Division and year	:	:	:	:	:	:
	:	:	:	:	:	:
	:	:	:	:	:	:
	:	:	:	:	:	:
	:	:	:	:	:	:
	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's

Middle Atlantic:

1937	1,887					
1936	1,900	25	51	23	68	2
1935 <u>/3</u>	1,904	25	61	22	88	20
1934	1,893	25	64	24	58	4
1933	1,850	26	95	24	70	7
1932	1,784	27	139	23	88	1
1931	1,751	28	101	24	90	1
1930 <u>/4</u>	1,692	29	130	24	96	1
1929	1,714	29	112	23	140	-
1928	1,731	30	104	21	130	-
1927	1,748	30	97	20	124	-
1926	1,791	31	104	23	155	-
1925	1,807	31	102	21	128	-
1924	1,825	31	110	21	138	-
1923	1,852	32	103	22	140	-
1922	1,891	33	96	21	147	-
1921	1,912	33	36	21	69	-
1920 <u>/3</u>	1,893	32	45	24	34	-

East North Central:

1937	4,777					
1936	4,790	80	135	52	187	11
1935 <u>/3</u>	4,769	81	139	51	190	42
1934	4,750	81	112	54	150	30
1933	4,695	83	181	51	188	21
1932	4,583	85	293	52	231	3
1931	4,508	85	236	53	211	2
1930 <u>/4</u>	4,442	86	259	53	246	4
1929	4,429	87	261	50	285	-
1928	4,487	88	214	47	313	-
1927	4,477	88	275	44	309	-
1926	4,550	90	211	50	324	-
1925	4,598	92	252	47	345	-
1924	4,587	93	297	47	332	-
1923	4,621	94	264	49	343	-
1922	4,698	96	229	47	355	-
1921	4,826	99	104	47	284	-
1920 <u>/3</u>	4,914	96	96	52	228	-

Table 4. - Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and major geographic divisions, 1920 - 1937 /1, continued.

Division and year	: Farm population: on January 1	: Increases in farm population during the year due to: Births	: Decreases in farm population during the year due to: Arrivals: from city, town, or village	: Gain or loss due to farm migration
	: 000's	: 000's	: 000's	: 000's
West North Central:				
1937	4,940			
1936	5,041	102	90	49
1935 <u>/3</u>	5,108	104	108	45
1934	5,162	111	90	49
1933	5,149	109	125	46
1932	5,069	112	306	46
1931	5,005	114	300	46
1930 <u>/4</u>	5,030	116	283	47
1929	5,034	117	294	44
1928	5,019	118	311	41
1927	5,055	119	301	39
1926	5,098	122	249	44
1925	5,134	124	242	41
1924	5,133	125	278	41
1923	5,163	127	238	43
1922	5,223	129	191	42
1921	5,226	133	134	41
1920 <u>/3</u>	5,101	129	124	47
South Atlantic:				
1937	6,314			
1936	6,275	164	98	75
1935 <u>/3</u>	6,204	164	139	72
1934	6,140	169	109	73
1933	6,131	157	138	66
1932	6,038	164	178	68
1931	5,947	159	170	70
1930 <u>/4</u>	5,864	160	172	72
1929	5,900	162	185	68
1928	5,910	163	198	63
1927	5,880	165	215	60
1926	6,013	168	155	68
1925	6,136	171	170	63
1924	6,125	173	219	63
1923	6,242	174	185	66
1922	6,474	178	146	65
1921	6,471	184	87	63
1920 <u>/3</u>	6,417	178	48	71

Table 4. - Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and major geographic divisions, 1920 - 1937 /1, continued.

Division and year	Farm population: on January 1	Increases in farm population during the year due to: Births	Decreases in farm population during the year due to: Arrivals: from city, town, or village	Deaths for city, town, or village	Gain or loss due to farm migration /2
	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's
East South Central:					
1937	5,430				
1936	5,377	152	94	59	129
1935 /3	5,335	153	109	57	161
1934	5,322	154	75	57	142
1933	5,357	147	105	54	193
1932	5,230	153	191	54	159
1931	5,136	146	153	55	151
1930 /4	5,052	146	169	59	177
1929	5,027	148	160	55	228
1928	4,992	149	195	52	257
1927	4,979	150	194	50	281
1926	5,057	154	120	55	297
1925	5,089	157	100	52	237
1924	5,088	158	153	52	258
1923	5,135	159	118	54	270
1922	5,227	162	80	53	281
1921	5,239	168	41	52	169
1920 /3	5,183	162	46	58	94
West South Central:					
1937	5,282				
1936	5,344	135	112	56	222
1935 /3	5,388	141	138	51	221
1934	5,415	149	131	53	199
1933	5,464	142	157	52	235
1932	5,299	147	308	52	233
1931	5,249	150	305	53	346
1930 /4	5,275	147	264	55	378
1929	5,290	149	281	52	393
1928	5,243	150	300	48	355
1927	5,245	151	278	46	385
1926	5,343	155	261	52	462
1925	5,302	158	217	49	285
1924	5,305	159	235	48	349
1923	5,338	160	209	51	351
1922	5,392	163	188	49	356
1921	5,270	169	215	49	213
1920 /3	5,228	163	131	54	198

Table 4. - Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and major geographic divisions, 1920 - 1937 /1, continued.

Division and year	: Farm population: on January 1	: Increases in farm population during the year due to: Births	: Arrivals: from city, town, or village	: Decreases in farm population during the year due to: Deaths	: Departures: for city, town, or village	: Gain or loss due to farm migration <u>/2</u>
	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's
Mountain:						
1937	1,143					
1936	1,164	28	42	12	79	--
1935 <u>/3</u>	1,188	30	42	13	81	-2
1934	1,207	30	43	13	72	-7
1933	1,202	29	47	12	69	8
1932	1,183	29	121	12	131	10
1931	1,140	30	97	12	86	9
1930 <u>/4</u>	1,122	31	113	13	123	3
1929	1,130	32	130	12	158	--
1928	1,112	32	164	12	166	--
1927	1,109	32	143	11	161	--
1926	1,100	33	137	12	149	--
1925	1,108	33	106	12	135	--
1924	1,109	33	134	11	157	--
1923	1,124	34	107	12	144	--
1922	1,155	35	79	12	133	--
1921	1,152	36	49	12	70	--
1920 <u>/3</u>	1,168	35	26	13	64	--
Pacific:						
1937	1,247					
1936	1,210	20	64	14	56	23
1935 <u>/3</u>	1,193	19	60	14	60	12
1934	1,168	19	49	13	43	13
1933	1,147	18	64	13	62	12
1932	1,125	19	185	13	165	-8
1931	1,130	18	123	13	141	1
1930 <u>/4</u>	1,124	17	157	13	171	8
1929	1,113	16	136	12	129	--
1928	1,108	17	163	12	163	--
1927	1,088	18	147	11	134	--
1926	1,063	18	141	12	122	--
1925	1,046	18	106	12	95	--
1924	1,041	18	106	11	108	--
1923	1,047	19	90	12	103	--
1922	1,066	19	73	12	99	--
1921	1,038	20	62	12	42	--
1920 <u>/3</u>	1,014	19	40	13	22	--

- /1 The farm population at the beginning of one year is equal to the farm population at the beginning of the previous year plus the births and arrivals at farms, minus deaths and departures from farms, plus or minus the gain or loss due to farm to farm migration. For the years 1930 to 1934, inclusive, certain allowances are included, though not shown in the table. These allowances are due to (a) changes to or from farming without change in residence and (b) changes in interpretation of Census instructions. It is not possible to separate the effects of these two factors. Figures for 1920 to 1929 have been revised in line with figures for 1930 to 1934 which were published previously.
- /2 Persons who move from farms in one geographic division to farms in another division. For the United States total these must balance. The figures on farm to farm movement were not tabulated separately before 1930.
- /3 Enumeration, United States Bureau of the Census.
- /4 Estimated, based on Census enumeration of April 1, 1930.